

H1N1 – Death Notification

The recent emergence of a novel Influenza A (H1N1) virus has forced public health officials to prepare for the possibility of unprecedented influenza-related illnesses and deaths. It's important for public health purposes that the Department of Health and Human Services learn of influenza-related deaths in a timely way.

Consequently, the Division of Public Health has embedded a new influenza notification component in the Electronic Death Registration System (EDRS) to be used by Nebraska Funeral Establishments.

At the discretion of the Director of Public Health, this field might be activated in the event of a significant disease outbreak in Nebraska.

Funeral Establishments will see a query that will ask, "Influenza Related Death?" The choices will be Y for Yes, N for No or U for Unknown/Don't Know.

The screenshot displays the 'DEATH - 2009 - Netsmart VRS' application window. The interface includes a menu bar (File, Search, Requests, Actions, Work Queue, Linking, Tools, Administration, Help) and a toolbar with various icons. Below the menu is a tabbed interface with tabs for Decedent, Dec History, Disposition, Cause of Death, Certifier, Demographics, Complete, and Flags. The 'Disposition' tab is active, showing a form with the following sections:

- Disposition**
 - Method of Disposition: A dropdown menu.
 - Body Embalmed?: A checkbox.
 - Disposition Date: A date field (MM/DD/YYYY).
 - Influenza Related Death? (Y,N,U): A checkbox with a tooltip that reads 'Enter Y for Yes, N for No or U for Unknown/Don't Know.'
- Cemetery/Crematory State**: A dropdown menu with 'Nebraska' selected.
- City/Town**: A dropdown menu.
- Cemetery, Crematory or Other Location**: A dropdown menu.
- Funeral Home**
 - Name: A dropdown menu with 'Omaha Funeral Home-Omaha-1234 Mockingbird Lane' selected.
 - Trade Name: A text field with 'Omaha Funeral Home'.
 - Address: A text field with '1234 Mockingbird Lane'.
 - City: A dropdown menu with 'Omaha' selected.
 - State: A dropdown menu with 'Nebraska' selected.
 - Zip Code: A text field with '68114'.
 - Preferred Method of Contact: A dropdown menu with 'Phone' selected.
 - Phone: A text field with '(402)391-7777'.
 - Extension: A text field.
 - Fax: A text field.
 - Email: A text field with 'office@omahafuneralhome.com'.

The Windows taskbar at the bottom shows the Start button, several open applications (MetaFrame P..., Citrix Cli..., Microsoft..., Sally Badouse...), and the system clock indicating 12:00 PM.

During periods of heightened influenza virus activity, funeral home personnel collecting fact-of-death information will be asked to query family, next-of-kin or others regarding whether the death was in any way related to influenza. At times when influenza virus is not deemed to be causing heightened public health concerns, this field will not be activated and thus will not appear on the EDRS screen.

This addition will allow near real-time public health notification of influenza-related fatalities and complement, but not replace, the current system which requires physicians to notify the county and state of such events.

We strongly encourage all Funeral Directors and staff who are responsible for Death Certificate reporting to use the EDRS. Upon learning of a suspected influenza-related death from communications with the family, physician, or coroner, Funeral Establishments will have the capability to electronically report this critical information to the state health department through EDRS along with routine fact of death information. As a result, public health authorities in Nebraska will have timely access to critical information to inform and guide influenza prevention and control interventions.

Collection of this information by Funeral Establishments is for public health purposes only. The requirement of coroners, county attorneys and physicians to report the official cause of death will continue as part of their medical and legal responsibilities.

We strongly encourage funeral establishments that are not actively using or not currently authorized to use the EDRS system to consider the use of EDRS for reporting all deaths. To learn more about EDRS please visit the EDRS website (<http://www.dhhs.ne.gov/edrs/>) and call the Vital Records training coordinator at 402-471-0919 to establish an account.